

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

00-24

October 27, 2000

ON RIGHT? RIGHT ON! GRANT TRAINS CHP IN CHILD SAFETY

SACRAMENTO - California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers statewide are being trained under a \$1.1 million federal grant to assist parents in securing their children properly in safety seats.

“A national study found that nearly 80 percent of the time, children were improperly secured in safety seats. That’s a tragedy, because for children a safety seat is the next best thing to a guardian angel,” said CHP Deputy Commissioner William Carlson.

Carlson said the “On Right? Right On!” grant is a three-year program that trains CHP officers as technicians and provides the tools so parents can get training and equipment to buckle their children properly.

Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for children ages one through four, Carlson said. Thirty-nine children were killed in California traffic collisions in 1999. Of those children, 11 were not in safety seats and 15 were in improperly used seats.

At today’s kickoff, Carlson explained that grant’s goal is to reduce traffic deaths for improperly restrained children under four by 50 percent. “A 50 percent reduction in fatalities is an ambitious goal. By aiming high, we hope to make California safer for children who are young and helpless and can’t protect themselves,” Carlson said.

The grant provides 32 hours of training to officers, who will be qualified to instruct parents and caregivers in recognizing common errors made when they install the safety seat in the vehicle and secure the child in the seat.

The grant expands the 1-800-TELL-CHP hotline that allows citizens to report instances where children are riding unrestrained. A new database of these reports will allow the CHP to follow up with educational materials to registered owners of vehicles reported to the hotline.

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The California Highway Patrol is a law enforcement and traffic safety agency reporting to Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and Governor Gray Davis.

CHILD SAFETY SEAT FACT SHEET

39 children under 4 were killed in traffic collisions in California in 1999. Only 7 of the children were properly secured in safety seats.

In 11 of the deaths, no safety seat was used and/or present.

79.5 percent of child safety seats are misused, according to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study.

A motorist who fails to secure a child under 4 years old and under 40 pounds is violating the California Vehicle Code. The base fine for a citation is \$100 for the first offense.

Beginning in 2002, motorists will be required to place children in a booster seat until the child is 60 pounds or 6 years old.

The safest place for a child is in the back seat. For the first year, the infant seat should be facing the rear.

Motorists who spot children improperly secured can call 1-800-TELL-CHP and report the vehicle type, license number, location, time of day and ages of children involved. The CHP will send a letter to the registered owner of the vehicle.